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Message Text

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63
ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

MBFR-03 SAJ-01 OMB-01 ACDA-19 IO-13 NIC-01 RSR-01

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R 261633 Z JUN 73
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5921
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUESSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
USMISSION BERLIN
AMCONSUL STUTTGART

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E. O. 11652: N/ A
TAGS: PFOR, GW
SUBJECT: STEINER SCANDAL

REF: BONN 8688

1. SUMMARY: THE FIRST FLUSH OF PUBLIC AND PRESS INTEREST IN THE STEINER SCANDAL IS RECEDING, PERHAPS TO BE REVIVED BY STEINER' S SCHEDULED APPEARANCE BEFORE A SPECIAL BUNDESTAG INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE ON JUNE 28 AT THAT TIME, STEINER, A CDU DEPUTY IN THE SIXTH BUNDESTAG, WILL REPORTEDLY CLAIM THAT SPD WHIP KARL WIENAND BRIBED HIM WITH 50,000 DM TO VOTE AGAINST RAINER BARZEL WHEN BARZEL ATTEMPTED TO ASSUME THE CHANCELLORSHIP IN APRIL 1972.
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THE REPORTED PLETHORA OF POSSIBLE NEW FIGURES IN THE SCANDAL HAS APPARENTLY BEEN EXHAUSTED BY THE PRESS EVEN THOUGH VARIOUS GERMAN SECURITY AND POLICE AGENCIES CONTINUE THEIR INVESTIGATIONS. THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES ARE MANEUVERING CAUTIOUSLY EITHER TO GAIN ADVANTAGE (IN THE CASE OF THE CDU) OR MINIMIZE DAMAGE (SPD). END SUMMARY.

2. ON JUNE 2, 69 CDU DEPUTIES SPONSORED A BILL MAKING BRIBERY OF A DEPUTY OR ACCEPTANCE OF A BRIBE BY A DEPUTY, CRIMINAL OFFENSES.

3. THE SPD NATIONAL LEADERSHIP, IN A JUNE 23 MEETING IN BERLIN, ADOPTED A RESOLUTION NOT TO DISCUSS THE STEINER CASE IN VIEW OF THE INVESTIGATION OF THE SPECIAL BUNDESTAG COMMITTEE. VICE-CHAIRMAN HEINZ KUEHB TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE SPD NATIONAL LEADERSHIP EXPECTS THE BUNDESTAG COMMITTEE TO WORK QUICKLY AND THAT THE COMMITTEE REPORT SHOULD BE CLEAR AND AS OBJECTIVE AS POSSIBLE. THE FOLLOWING DAY, SPEAKING IN SOUTHERN GERMANY, CHANCELLOR WILLY BRANDT CONDEMNED AS " SCANDALOUS" THE ACTIVITIES OF QUICK MAGAZINE ESPECIALLY FOR KEEPING STEINER UNDERCOVER WHILE QUICK PUBLISHED STEINER' S STORY.

4. ON THE SAME DAY, THE CDU ACCUSED THE SPD, AND ABOVE ALL, WILLY BRANDT OF ATTEMPTING THROUGH ABSOLUTE SILENCE TO PREVENT THE PUBLIC FROM LEARNING ABOUT THE FULL EXTENT OF THE STEINER SCANDAL. OPPOSITION LEADER KARL CARSTENS STATED THAT EVEN WORSE THAN CORRUPTION HAS BEEN THE ATTEMPT OF THE SPD PARLIAMENTARY PARTY TO HIDE THE CORRUPTION.

5. COMMENT: THERE IS NOT MUCH EXPECTATION IN OFFICIAL BONN THAT THE STEINER INVESTIGATION WILL REVEAL MUCH OF LASTING IMPORT OR IMPACT. BONN HAS OVER THE YEARS HAD MORE THAN ITS FAIR SHARE OF SCANDALS AND IN THIS CONNECTION, BUNDESTAG SPECIAL INVESTIGATORY COMMITTEES, WHEN EMPLOYED, HAVE NOT BEEN NOTABLY PRODUCTIVE.

6. CURRENT POLEMICS OVER STEINER ARE BEING KEPT WITHIN BOUNDS PROBABLY BECAUSE ALL THE MAJOR PARTIES REPRESENTED IN THE 1969-72 BUNDESTAG HAVE ILL- CONCEALED SKELETONS IN THEIR CLOSETS. THE GENERAL OPERATING ASSUMPTION IS THAT WIENAND ATTEMPTED TO (AND PERHAPS DID) BRIBE STEINER. OBVIOUSLY HE WAS ACTING FOR SOMEONE ALSE. EVER SINCE THE PAN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIR BLEW UP IN THE SUMMER OF 1971, WEHNER HAS PROTECTED WIENAND FROM THE SPD' S
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LEFT WING. THIS IS AN OPEN SECRET AND SO PUTTING TWO AND TWO TOGETHER, BONN REASONS THAT WIENAND FRONTED FOR WEHNER. AS LONG AS WIENAND REMAINS PROTECTED, THERE IS LITTLE LIKELI-HOOD THAT SENIOR SPD LEADERS WILL BE IMPLICATED.

7. THE SPD OFFICIALLY HAS WELCOMED THE INVESTIGATION BUT IT IS EMBARRASSED. ITS CLAIM TO A UNIQUE DEGREE OF MORALITY IN

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POLITICS HAS BEEN DAMAGED. SOME OF THIS APPARENTLY IS RUBBING OFF ON THE CHANCELLOR. THE FIRST IMPORTANT STATE ELECTIONS, HOWEVER, WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE FALL OF 1974. BY THEN, THE STEINER AFFAIR SHOULD HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO THE STATUS OF A DEAD HORSE, TO BE BEATEN WHEN NECESSARY BUT WITH EVER DECREASING IMPACT. IN ITS EMBARRASSMENT, THE SPD HAS OPENED UP AN END- JUSTIFIES- THE-MEANS LINE OF ARGUMENTATION WHICH DELIBERATELY CONFUSES THE CORRUPTION ISSUE. WEHNER ARGUES THAT THE ELECTORATE ON NOVEMBER 19, 1972 DEMOCRATICALLY RE- ELECTED THE BRANDT- SCHEEL GOVERNMENT WITH A MAJORITY SIGNIFICANTLY LARGER THAN THAT WHICH FOLLOWED THE 1969 GENERAL ELECTIONS. THE TURN- BACK OF BARZEL' S BID FOR POWER IN APRIL 1972 SET THE STAGE FOR THIS DEMOCRATIC DECISION. SINCE A DEMOCRATIC END HAD BEEN SERVED, WHAT' S ALL THE FUSS?

8. AN OFFSHOOT OF THE STEINER AFFAIR WILL BE INCREASED MORAL PRESTIGE FOR BOTH KARL CARSTENS AND HELMUT KOHL. NEITHER WAS A MAIN ACTOR IN 1969-72 BUNDESTAG AFFAIRS. BOTH HAVE REPUTATIONS FOR MORAL INTEGRITY. BOTH MAY WELL BE ABLE TO ARGUE THAT THEY REPRESENT A NEW FORCE IN GERMAN POLITICS AND POLITICAL PRACTICE. AS THE STEINER AFFAIR UNFOLDS, BOTH CARSTENS AND KOHL SHOULD EMERGE WITH ENHANCED IMAGES IN COMPARISON WITH THEIR MAIN SPD OPPONENTS WHO, HAVING BEEN PROMINENTLY ON CENTER STAGE DURING THE 1969-72 PERIOD, ARE TAINTED BY THEIR OWN AS WELL BY ALL THE ILL- CONCEIVED MACHINATIONS OF THEIR SUBORDINATES.
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EUR
FRANKFURT
LONDON
MOSCOW
PARIS

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